

image
212
DIGITAL
EDITION

SPAWN



VIOLATION
OF
TRUST
PART 2 OF 2



PREVIOUSLY IN SPAWN

Twitch is confused by the lack of information on Jim, after running his fingerprints through the system. In fact, Jim's whole file was manually blacked out. Twitch also informs Jim that Clown and Violator are one and the same, infuriating Jim.

Marc and Susan continue to worry about Sara and Jim, and decide to enlist the help of the police.

Meanwhile, Rowand becomes a person of interest in the hospital homicide investigation, leaving him in a state of limbo.

Back at Bludd's corporation, the freed members of the Old Guard recount the details of their battle with Spawn. Bludd soon realizes Spawn's inability to control his new power has exposed Heaven's Gateway, leaving God vulnerable.

On the other side of town, Clown exposes his evil plan to Jim in the alleys, resulting in an altercation. However, Jim's opponent isn't the fat, conniving Clown – it's the Violator!

JON GOFF

Plot

TODD McFARLANE

Additional Plot

WILL CARLTON

WRITER

SZYMON KUDRANSKI

ARTIST

FCO PLASCENCIA

COLOR

TOM ORZECOWSKI

LETTERING

JON GOFF

Additional Scripting

MICHAEL GOLDEN

Cover Artist

Todd McFarlane

Editor

Managing Editor

Jen Cassidy

Art Director

Ben Timmreck

Production Artist

Joe Ferstl

Publisher for Image Comics

Eric Stephenson

SPAWN CREATED BY

TODD McFARLANE

image

TODD McFARLANE
PRODUCTIONS

SPAWN.COM

Spawn #212, Digital Edition. Published by IMAGE COMICS, 2134 Allston Way, Second Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704, \$2.99 USA. Spawn, its logo and its symbol are registered trademarks © 2011 Todd McFarlane Productions, Inc. All other related characters are TM and © 2011 Todd McFarlane Productions, Inc. All rights reserved. The characters, events and stories in this publication are entirely fictional. With exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this publication may be reprinted without the permission of Todd McFarlane Productions, Inc.

20 MINUTES AGO.

"WE THROUGH HERE? OR DO YOU WANT TO KEEP GOING? IT'S UP TO YOU.

"I DON'T MIND *KICKING YOUR ASS* A LITTLE LONGER-- YOU JUST TELL ME WHEN YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH.

"THOUGH I'VE GOTTA TELL YOU, JIM-- EVEN WITH THE FEW GOOD LICKS YOU'VE GOTTEN IN-- I'M GETTING BORED OF THIS *SKIRMISH* OF OURS. SO, WHY DON'T WE PUT IT ON HOLD AND CLEAN OURSELVES UP A LITTLE."



"I MEAN IN ALL SERIOUSNESS, YOU'RE REALLY SOMETHING SPECIAL. MOST SPAWNS WOULD BE A PILE OF GOO BY NOW.

"BUT NOT YOU. SOMEHOW... YOU'RE *DIFFERENT*."

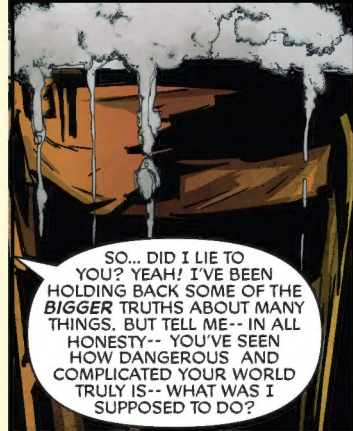


"THAT'S WHY I'M GOING TO BUY YOU A BEER! A BIG *FAT FROTHY ONE!*

"AND BEFORE YOU SAY A WORD-- I WON'T TAKE *NO* FOR AN ANSWER. JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE TO FRESHEN MYSELF UP, IF YOU DON'T MIND."



NOW.



SO... DID I LIE TO YOU? YEAH! I'VE BEEN HOLDING BACK SOME OF THE *BIGGER* TRUTHS ABOUT MANY THINGS. BUT TELL ME-- IN ALL HONESTY-- YOU'VE SEEN HOW DANGEROUS AND COMPLICATED YOUR WORLD TRULY IS-- WHAT WAS I SUPPOSED TO DO?



I DIDN'T KNOW YOU. COULDN'T TRUST YOU. NOT JUST OFF-HAND. NOT WITH WHAT'S AT STAKE. SO I KEPT THINGS FROM YOU THAT I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT NOT ACCEPT-- AT LEAST NOT WHILE YOU'RE SO NEW AT ALL THIS.



BUT!... THAT'S THE PAST! SO, CHEERS TO YOU, PAL!

AND I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND MY NEW LOOK-- THOUGHT I'D TRY TO LOOK A LITTLE MORE PRESENTABLE-- CREEPY LITTLE CLOWNS TEND TO FREAK PEOPLE OUT, ESPECIALLY THE KIDS.

SO WHAT ARE YOU? A CHANGE-LING?

SOME-THING LIKE THAT, THOUGH I HAVE LIMITATIONS.

TELL ME ABOUT IT. I'M STILL TRYING TO FIND THE 'STARTS AND STOPS' OF MY POWERS TOO.

THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE AN UPPER LIMIT ON YOU YET, AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, WHICH MAKES YOU DIFFERENT THAN ALL THE REST OF THEM.

MEANING THE OTHER SPAWNS?

RIGHT.

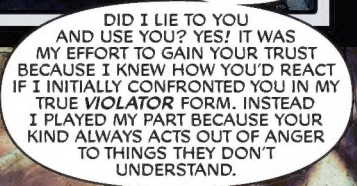
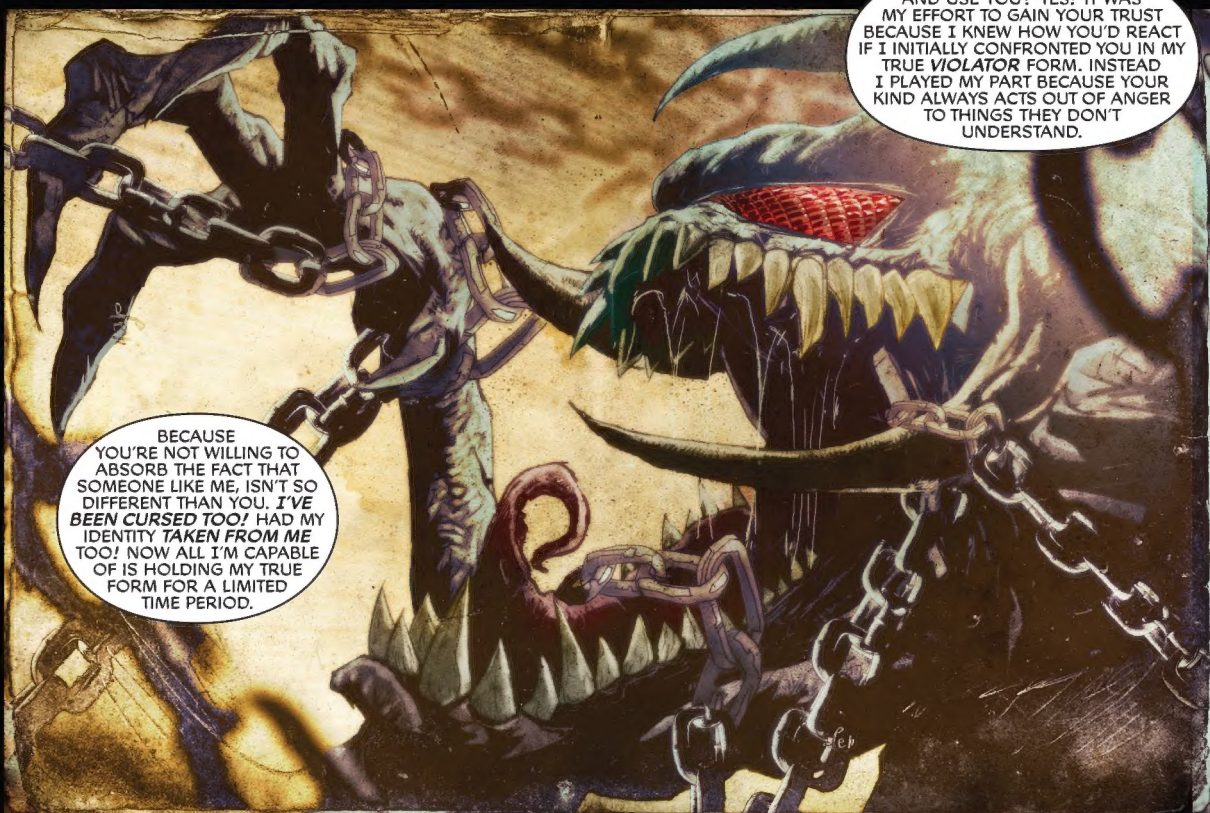
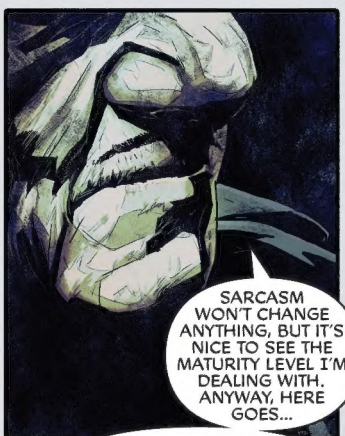
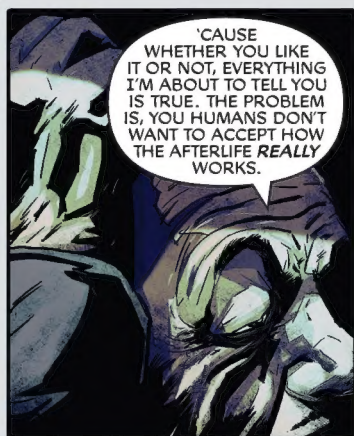
SO NOW YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT ME-- IS THAT IT?

YOU'RE GETTING AHEAD OF YOURSELF. WE CALLED A TRUCE BACK IN THE ALLEYS BECAUSE I SAID I'D COME CLEAN AND LAY MY CARDS ON THE TABLE FOR YOU. HOPEFULLY, YOU'LL APPRECIATE THE AWKWARD POSITION I FOUND MYSELF IN AND SEE WHY IT WAS NECESSARY TO DECEIVE YOU ALL THIS TIME. BUT YOU DO WHATEVER YOU NEED TO WITH THIS INFORMATION. YOU'RE YOUR OWN MAN.

AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT YOU SPAWNS KEEP TELLING YOURSELVES.

IN THE END YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIKE ME, JIM-- I'M NOT LOOKING FOR A FRIEND. I'M LOOKING FOR HELP AND YOU PROVIDE THAT IN SPADES. I'M GOING TO NEED THAT IF WE HOPE TO HAVE ANY CHANCE OF PREVENTING

MALEBOLEIA
FROM TAKING OVER THE EARTH!



THE BIGGER QUESTION YOU SHOULD BE ASKING YOURSELF IS **WHY?** WHY WOULD I HIDE IN THE SHADOWS?

BECAUSE... I DON'T WANT THEM TO FIND ME. AND BY **THEM** I'M TALKING ABOUT HEAVEN AND HELL. IF THEY DON'T KNOW WHERE I AM THAT ALLOWS ME TIME TO CONTINUE PLOTTING AGAINST THEM.

SEE, HERE'S HOW IT **REALLY** WORKS. HUMANS DON'T GO TO HEAVEN OR HELL BASED ON THEIR ACTIONS HERE ON EARTH. IT HAS **NOTHING** TO DO WITH HOW GOOD OR EVIL YOU ARE. ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!

INSTEAD, EVERY TIME SOMEONE DIES, THEIR SOUL GOES TO THE SIDE THAT DIDN'T GET THE LAST ONE. A PERSON DIES, THEY GO TO HEAVEN. THE NEXT PERSON THAT DIES GOES TO HELL. NEXT GOES TO HEAVEN. THEN HELL.

HEAVEN. HELL. HEAVEN. HELL. BACK AND FORTH FOREVER.

AND BECAUSE THAT'S HOW A SOUL'S DESTINATION IS DETERMINED. IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES... DEPENDING ON EXACTLY WHEN THEY DIED, HITLER AND BIN LADEN COULD BE SITTING IN HEAVEN WHILE MOTHER TERESA ROTTS IN HELL.

AND THOUGH THAT THOUGHT MIGHT DISTURB YOUR SENSIBILITIES-- GOD AND SATAN DISLIKE IT JUST AS MUCH AS YOU DO. SO FROM TIME TO TIME THEY TRADE WITH EACH OTHER. GOD WILL TAKE BACK MOTHER TERESA-- **BUT** HE MAY HAVE TO GIVE UP JACK THE RIPPER IN RETURN.

THE PROBLEM? GOD ISN'T ALWAYS WILLING TO SWAP THE MOST HEINOUS SOULS HE HAS FOR THE PURE ONES. YOU KNOW WHY? BECAUSE HE UNDERSTANDS THOSE CORRUPT SOULS SERVE A PURPOSE FOR HIM, TOO.

THIS IS **BULLSHIT!**



WHY?!!

BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN TAUGHT SOMETHING ELSE FROM BIRTH?! BECAUSE ORGANIZED RELIGION PUTS A BOOK IN YOUR HANDS ON SUNDAY AND BRAINWASHES YOU INTO BELIEVING IT'S SOME FLAWLESS PIECE OF WORK?

THAT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACTS! YOU'LL SEE IT WITH YOUR OWN EYES SOME DAY. FOR NOW YOU'LL HAVE TO DEAL WITH IT AS BEST YOU CAN.

KEEP GOING.

YOU WANT ME TO CONTINUE OR NOT?

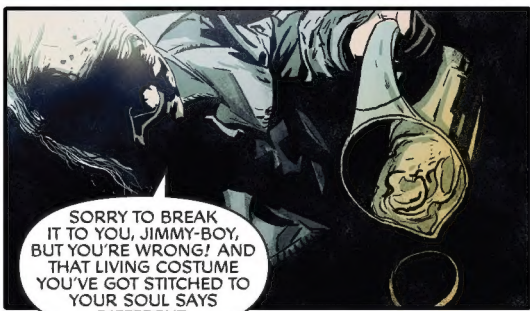
LIKE I SAID, GOD CAN'T TRADE AWAY ALL THE EVIL SOULS HE HAS FOR THE SWEET BINGO LADIES SATAN IS HOLDING. BECAUSE HE KNOWS THAT WHEN THE APOCALYPSE COMES HE DOESN'T WANT AN ARMY OF PASSIVE, POLITE SOULS. HEAVEN WOULD GET SLAUGHTERED, RAPISTS, MURDERERS, AND ASSASSINS VERSUS A BUNCH OF SOCCER MOMS ISN'T GOING TO CUT IT. GOD GETS THAT.

BECAUSE WHEN THE HOLY WAR BREAKS OUT, GOD WANTS HIS ARMY TO BE AS RUTHLESS AS HELL'S.

AND THAT'S WHERE WE COME IN. WE'RE NOT QUITE SO DIFFERENT IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF ALL THINGS.



I'M NOTHING LIKE YOU!



SORRY TO BREAK IT TO YOU, JIMMY-BOY, BUT YOU'RE WRONG! AND THAT LIVING COSTUME YOU'VE GOT STITCHED TO YOUR SOUL SAYS DIFFERENT.



HIS NAME IS
MALEBOLGIA-- RULER
OF THE 8th CIRCLE OF HELL.
HE'S CREATED EVERY HELLSPAWN
THAT'S EVER EXISTED... *EXCEPT*
YOU. YOU'RE THE ONLY SPAWN
THAT'S EVER BEEN BORN
OUTSIDE OF HELL. WHICH
MAKES YOU UNIQUE.

ON
TOP OF
THAT, WE
BOTH SERVE
THE SAME
MASTER!

BUT NOW HE'S COMING
BACK AFTER HIS DEFEAT.*
AND HE DOESN'T
LIKE WHERE THINGS ARE
HEADED.

IN FACT--
HE'S PISSED. FEELS
BETRAYED. NOT JUST BY
ME-- THOUGH I'M PRETTY
HIGH UP ON HIS SHIT
LIST AT THIS POINT--
BUT BY EVERYONE--
EVERYTHING.

AND YOU,
MR. DOWNING--
YOU'RE GOING TO PLAY
A BIG PART IN HIS PLANS.
BECAUSE THAT SUIT YOU WEAR--
IT'S A WEAPON. HIS WEAPON. AND
MALEBOLGIA, HE'S GOING TO
COME FOR YOU-- COME FOR IT--
THAT SUIT-- FULL THROTTLE.
BECAUSE HE NEEDS
YOU TO BE HIS SLAVE.



BUT
THERE'S A
DIFFERENCE
THIS TIME.

NOW HE'S
LOOKING TO EXPAND
HIS TURF TO EARTH-- HE
TOLD ME DIRECTLY THAT HE
PLANS TO END IT ALL-- TO BRING
ABOUT THE *FINAL RECKONING*.^{*}
AND LIKE A TERRORIST BOMBER,
HE'S WILLING TO KILL HIMSELF
IF IT SERVES A GREATER
'GOOD.' AND YOU, HE SAID --
YOU'RE HIS ACE IN
THE HOLE.

SO IF
I HAD ANY
DOUBTS
ABOUT YOUR
'UNIQUENESS'
BEFORE,
MALEBOLGIA
CONFIRMED IT
BY MAKING YOU
HIS CENTER-
PIECE.

HE'S NEVER
USED A SPAWN TO
ASSIST IN ANY DIRECT
'RETRIBUTION MISSION.'
AND THOUGH HE'S
ALWAYS FAVORED THOSE
HALFBREEDS-- AND THERE
HAVE BEEN PLENTY TO
CHOOSE FROM-- NONE
HAVE EVER ACTUALLY
SERVED AS HIS
MESSENGER.

DID HE
SAY HOW
HE WAS
PLANNING ON
RECRUITING
ME TO HIS
SIDE?

NO.
BUT HE
CAN'T DO
ANYTHING
UNTIL HE PUTS
HIMSELF BACK
TOGETHER.

WHAT'S THAT MEAN?

DON'T
WORRY, I'LL
GET TO
THAT.

^{*} See SPAWN #200--Todd



RIGHT NOW, THOUGH, I DON'T THINK HE EVEN KNOWS YOU EXIST. NOT YOU AS SPAWN-- OR YOUR COSTUME-- BUT JIM DOWNING THE PERSON.

I THINK HE STILL BELIEVES THAT UNDER YOUR SUIT YOU'RE STILL AL SIMMONS. THAT COULD HELP. YOU'RE NOW AN 'X-FACTOR'-- ON A COUPLE OF FRONTS.



FIRST, I'VE FOUGHT AND DESTROYED EVERY SPAWN THAT'S EVER BEEN SENT TO EARTH. IT DIDN'T MATTER WHEN THEY APPEARED OR WHAT KIND OF WEAPONS THEY TRIED TO USE AGAINST ME. I TOOK THEM ALL DOWN.

EXCEPT ONE. THAT WAS SIMMONS.

HE'S THE ONLY ONE THAT TOOK HIMSELF OUT OF THE GAME INTENTIONALLY. AT FIRST I THOUGHT HE'D FINALLY GONE AROUND THE BEND. BUT NOW-- NOW I'M NOT SO SURE.

HE MAY HAVE ACTUALLY KNOWN WHAT HE WAS DOING WHEN HE COMMITTED SUICIDE-- BECAUSE HIS SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE AND YOUR IMMEDIATE PRESENCE HAS SHIFTED SOME OF THE GAME PIECES AROUND.

HE ACTUALLY MIGHT HAVE SENSED IT WOULD THROW EVERYTHING INTO TEMPORARY CHAOS-- CREATING A DISTRACTION BIG ENOUGH TO SNEAK YOU IN THE BACK DOOR.



WHICH MEANS
THE SECOND--
AND MORE IMPORTANT
DIFFERENCE-- IS THAT,
OF ALL THE SPAWNS EVER
CREATED, YOU'RE THE
ONLY ONE TO HOST A
SYMBIOTE **AND** STILL
HAVE A BEATING HEART.
THAT'S NEVER BEEN
DONE BEFORE.



EVERY
OTHER SPAWN
HAD DIED IN THEIR
HUMAN FORM AND
BEEN 'REBORN' IN
HELL BEFORE
STEPPING FOOT
BACK ON
EARTH.

YOU WERE
ON LIFE SUPPORT
DURING YOUR
ENTIRE COMA.
AS FAR AS I CAN
TELL, YOU **NEVER**
DIED.



I DON'T KNOW
WHAT THAT MEANS
EXACTLY, OR WHAT
SIGNIFICANCE IT HAS TO
YOUR POWER LEVEL, BUT
IT'S DEFINITELY SOME-
THING. THAT'S PROBABLY
WHY MALEBOLGIA HAS
HIS SIGHTS SET
ON YOU...

EVEN IF HE
THINKS YOU'RE SIMMONS,
HE MUST SENSE YOUR NEW
POWER POTENTIAL. AND IF HE
FELT THAT IN HIS WEAKENED
STATE AS THE '**FREAK**' THEN
YOU AND/OR YOUR COSTUME
MUST BE DAMN NEAR
A WALKING
ATOMIC BOMB!





THEY'RE
ALL WAITING
FOR YOU IN
THE MAIN
CHAMBER.

HAVE
THEY BEEN
WAITING
LONG?

ONLY
ABOUT TEN
MINUTES.


GOOD.
DO THEY
HAVE THEIR
REPORT?

YES. WE
BELIEVE
SO.



YOUR
EMINENCE.
THANK YOU FOR
MAKING THE TIME.
ON SUCH SHORT
NOTICE, WE'LL TRY
TO MAKE THIS
AS BRIEF AS
POSSIBLE.

AS YOU KNOW, THERE
IS AN EXTREMELY PRESSING
MATTER UNFOLDING IN AMERICA.
ONE WHICH WE'VE BEEN MONITORING
QUITE CLOSELY, WITH ALL OUR MOST
RELIABLE CONTACTS, BOTH INSIDE
AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH. AND
WITHOUT OVERSTATING IT-- WE HAVE
GRAVE CONCERNS ABOUT THIS
SITUATION AND HOW IT MAY
AFFECT YOUR POSITION.



THIS
"SITUATION"--
AS YOU CALL IT--
IS AN AFFRONT-- AN
AMERICAN PLOT TO
ONCE AGAIN DISCREDIT
PORTIONS OF THE
CHURCH-- AND WE
HOPE, MR. KENDALL,
THAT YOU'LL ADDRESS
IT IMMEDIATELY
IN ORDER TO
DISPEL ANY--

ACTUALLY,
FATHER-- THE
INFORMATION
WE'VE GATHERED SAYS
THAT THE HEALER WE'VE
BEEN INVESTIGATING-- A
MR. JIM DOWNING--
ISN'T A FRAUD.

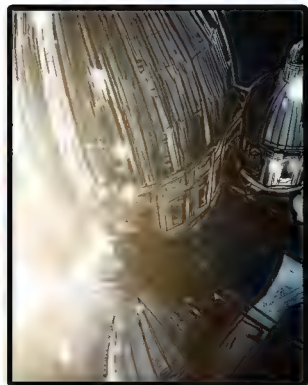
IN FACT-- THOUGH
OUR INVESTIGATION IS STILL
IN THE EARLY STAGES-- I'M GOING
TO GO AS FAR AS TO SAY THAT THIS
PARTICULAR "SITUATION" DESERVES YOUR
FULL AND UNDIVIDED ATTENTION UNTIL WE'VE
DETERMINED WITH SOME DEGREE OF
CERTITUDE WHETHER MR. DOWNING IS
WITH US, OR AGAINST US.



YOU
TALK LIKE
HE'S SOME
KIND OF
THREAT.



HE IS. TO
EVERYTHING YOU
HOLD DEAR. WE
BELIEVE HE MIGHT
BE "THE SECOND
COMING."



YOU HIRED US FOR
OUR EXPERTISE AND NOW WE'RE
GIVING IT TO YOU. WE'VE FOUND NOTHING
TO DISPEL THE NOTION THAT ALL OF HIS
ACTIONS AREN'T TRUE SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATION.
AS YOU'LL READ IN OUR REPORT, WE'VE
DONE AN EXHAUSTIVE FOLLOW-UP WITH
SOME OF HIS DOCTORS AND MANY
OF THE EYE WITNESSES AT HIS
"HEALINGS."

THAT'S
PREPOSTEROUS!

OUR JOB NOW IS TO
CONVINCE MR. DOWNING TO
ALIGN HIMSELF WITH THE CATHOLIC
CHURCH, AND GIVE HIS FULL SUPPORT
TO THE PONTIFF. WE'LL HAVE A MAJOR
PROBLEM ON OUR HANDS IF PEOPLE
THINK THEIR NEW MESSIAH IS
CONNECTED TO ANOTHER
RELIGION.



YOUR
HOLINESS--
WHAT IS YOUR
COMMAND?



FIND THIS
DOWNING AND
TELL HIM HE SHALL
HAVE HIS SALVATION
IN THE NAME OF THE
FATHER, THE SON AND
THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND
THAT OUR DOORS
ARE OPEN
TO HIM.

DO IT
WITH AS MUCH
SINCERITY AND
HUMILITY AS YOU CAN.
IF HE REFUSES-- MARK
HIM AS A HERETIC AND
ASSIGN HIM FOR
INQUISITION.




LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT-- THE DEVIL WANTS *ME* TO HELP *HIM* DESTROY EARTH. IS THAT RIGHT?

IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING... YES.

AND LET ME CORRECT YOU. MALEBOLGIA ISN'T THE DEVIL, HE'S A DEVIL. EACH CIRCLE HAS ONE OF ITS OWN. THINK OF IT AS SOME DEMONIC CORPORATE STRUCTURE.

WHERE'S THAT PUT YOU?

ATOP MALEBOLGIA'S SHITLIST.




LIKE I'VE TOLD YOU, I WAS HIRED FOR THE PRESTIGIOUS JOB OF TESTING AND TRAINING HIS SPAWNS. AT NO POINT IN HIS INSTRUCTIONS TO ME DID HE EVER SAY NOT TO CONSORT WITH MY ENEMY. LIKE WE'RE DOING RIGHT NOW.

THAT'S TREASON IN HIS EYES. PUNISHABLE ONLY BY MY DEATH. I'M NOT ABOUT TO LET THAT HAPPEN. NOT WHEN I'VE GOTTEN SO CLOSE TO MY GOAL.

THAT WOULD BE?

TO ASSUME HIS THRONE, OF COURSE. AND TO CONTROL THE 8th CIRCLE, LIKE I SHOULD HAVE DONE EONS AGO.





AS A BORN
DENIZEN OF HELL,
I NEVER FALTERED IN
MY DESIRE TO SEE HEAVEN
BURN OR TO REVEL IN THE
PAIN OF MANKIND'S EVENTUAL
FALL, BUT MALEBOLGIA'S
METHODS WOULD PLACE THE
FULL GLORY OF THAT FINAL
VICTORY IN THE HANDS OF
HALFBREEDS-- AND
THAT, I COULDN'T
TOLERATE.

I WAS LEFT
WITH NO CHOICE-- IT
WAS BETRAY MALEBOLGIA,
OR ALLOW HIM TO
FOREVER TAINT THE PURITY
OF OUR VENGEANCE
AGAINST GOD.

LET ME
GUESS-- YOU
WENT WITH
OPTION 'A'.



FOR ALL
THE GOOD
IT DID ME.

I USED
SIMMONS. I PUSHED
AND PRODDED HIM UNTIL
I HAD MY ASSASSIN. ONE
THAT WOULD TEACH
MALEBOLGIA A LESSON
BY DECAPITATING
HIM.


INSTEAD
I'M YOUR NEW
SIMMONS?
YOUR NEW
PUPPET?

NOT
SURE HOW
WELL THAT
SITS WITH ME,
CLOWN.



YOU'RE MISSING
THE POINT-- STILL VIEWING
OUR RELATIONSHIP AS ADVERSARIAL--
ME VERSUS YOU, WHICH ISN'T THE CASE.
I USED SIMMONS-- AND EVERY SPAWN
BEFORE HIM AS A MEANS TO AN END.
BUT, YOU-- I'M GIVING YOU A
CHOICE-- LETTING YOU DECIDE
YOUR FATE.

I COULDN'T'VE
HAD THIS DISCUSSION
WITH AL. HE WAS TOO CLOSED
OFF-- NARROW-MINDED. HE
WASN'T ABLE TO LOOK PAST HIS
OWN ANGER OR HIS MISGUIDED
NOTIONS OF RIGHT AND
WRONG.



WHAT I'M
OFFERING YOU,
HERE AND NOW,
IS THE CHANCE TO
BE ANYTHING BUT A
PUPPET, BECAUSE,
HERE'S THE
THING--

SIMMONS WAS
A MURDERER AND A
BASTARD WHEN HE WAS
HUMAN. HE NEVER UNDER-
STOOD THAT. HIS BLACK HEART
WAS THE REASON OUR MASTER
CHOSE HIM TO START WITH. BUT
HE SUCCEEDED AT ENDING
MALEBOLGIA'S REIGN OVER THE
8th CIRCLE.* AT LEAST
TEMPORARILY.


I ALWAYS THOUGHT
SIMMONS' VICTORY WAS
A LITTLE TOO EASY, THOUGH--
EVEN I FELL FOR IT, IN THE
BEGINNING, BECAUSE THERE WAS
A MAD SCRAM BY EVERYONE
VYING TO GRAB THE MANTLE
OF 'NEW KING.' IT WAS A
BLOODY MESS.

AND
LOYALTY BE
DAMNED!

EVEN ONE OF
MY OWN BROTHERS
WAS WILLING KILL ME FOR
A CHANCE AT THE THRONE--
BUT BEFORE I GUTTED HIM,
HE WHISPERED SOME-
THING. HE SAID, "HE'S
NOT GONE."

AT FIRST I
IGNORED IT-- BUT THEN
THINGS STARTED POPPING
UP. LITTLE THINGS. THINGS THAT
SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN HAPPENING.
ONLY RECENTLY WAS I ABLE
TO FIGURE OUT WHAT
IT ALL MEANT:

MALEBOLGIA
WAS GOING TO BE
COMING BACK--
EVENTUALLY.



THAT'S WHEN
I LEARNED ABOUT
HIS PLAN.


HE'D TAKEN HIS
POWERS AND SCATTERED THEM
RIGHT BEFORE HIS SUPPOSED
DEATH. HE KNEW SOMETHING WAS
GOING TO HAPPEN THAT DAY, SO
HE PROTECTED HIMSELF-- **IN
ADVANCE**-- BY SIPHONING OFF
PIECES OF HIMSELF AND HIDING
THEM HERE ON EARTH.

EACH
PIECE
BURIED
INSIDE ONE
OF HIS MOST
TRUSTED
SOLDIERS.


143-187



THOUGH
NOT ALL OF
THEM WERE
CAPABLE OF
ENDURING
THEIR HIDDEN
'GIFT.'




AND NOW HE'S
BEGUN PIECING
THEM BACK
TOGETHER. EACH
PART MAKING
HIM THAT MUCH
STRONGER.



THERE'S SEVEN
PIECES IN ALL. SMALL
HIDDEN FRAGMENTS WHICH,
ALONE, MEAN NOTHING OF
ANY CONSEQUENCE, BUT
TOGETHER-- TOGETHER THEY
MAKE UP THE ESSENCE OF
A **DEVIL GOD** LUSTING
TO DISPLAY HIS
POWERS AGAIN.

BUT SOON HE'S
GOING TO FIND OUT
ONE OF THOSE PIECES ISN'T
WHERE IT SHOULD BE. AND
THAT'LL BE OUR CHANCE-- OUR
ONE MOMENT TO POSSIBLY
DEFEAT HIM. BECAUSE AFTER THAT,
AFTER HE FINDS OUT IT WAS ME
THAT STOLE THAT PIECE AND HID
IT AWAY-- NOTHING AND NO
ONE WILL BE SPARED
HIS WRATH.



WHICH
IS WHY THE
PERSON NOW
HOLDING IT
DOESN'T EVEN
KNOW IT'S
THERE.



BUT THAT
WON'T
MATTER.

BECAUSE THE
VERY SECOND MALEBOLGIA
DISCOVERS A PIECE IS MISSING,
IT'LL BEGIN. HE'LL DESTROY EVERY-
THING IN HIS PATH WHILE HE LOOKS
FOR IT AND HE'LL BURN YOUR WORLD
TO THE GROUND. I'VE SEEN HIM DO IT
BEFORE. IT'S WHERE THE SAYING
'SCORCHED EARTH' COMES FROM.
NOTHING AND NO ONE WILL BE LEFT
STANDING! AND I'M TELLING YOU,
HE WON'T STOP UNTIL
HE FINDS IT.

YOU DON'T WANT
TO LIKE ME, FINE. BUT
SURELY THERE MUST BE
OTHERS IN YOUR LIFE YOU WANT
TO SEE LIVE. IF SO, THEN JOIN
ME **DAMN IT!!**

THAT'S IT. THAT'S
MY PITCH. I'M A F**CKER
AND WON'T APOLOGIZE FOR IT.
WHEN THE DAY COMES I'LL GLEEFULLY
STAND ON GOD'S THROAT AND
THANK HIM FOR ALL THE YEARS OF
FUN HE'S GIVEN ME. FOR CREATING
ALL THE HUMANS I KILLED ALONG
THE WAY. AND I WON'T
HAVE AN OUNCE OF
GUILT ABOUT IT.

SO, THERE'S YOUR
CHOICES. TAKE UP WITH ME--
AND MY ARMY OF DEMONS
IN ORDER TO SAVE THE WORLD OR
TRY AND DO SOMETHING ON YOUR
OWN. WHICH IS A DEATH SENTENCE
FOR EVERYONE! MYSELF
INCLUDED! IT'S TIME TO PICK
YOUR POISON!

F**K
YOU,
CLOWN!



YOU
WISH!



BESIDES, YOU'RE
THE ONE THAT WANTED
ALL THIS HONESTY
BULLSHIT-- AND NOW THAT
I'VE GIVEN IT TO YOU YOU'RE
GOING TO WHAT? RUN
AWAY? BECAUSE YOU'RE
NOT MAN ENOUGH TO
HANDLE IT!?

THAT'S
RIGHT!
BESIDES,
IF YOUR
BOSS--

**OUR
BOSS! YOU
HAVEN'T BEEN
LISTENING?! HE
CREATED BOTH
OF US!**

FINE! IF "OUR"
BOSS IS SUPPOSED
TO BE AS BIG A THREAT
TO YOU, ME, AND EVERY
DAMN THING HE
TOUCHES-- AS YOU SAY--
WHY WAIT 'TIL NOW TO
BRING IT UP? WHY WAIT
UNTIL WE'RE IN THIS
POSITION TO SAY ANY-
THING ABOUT ANY
OF THIS?




AND
BEFORE YOU
ANSWER--
DON'T!

BECAUSE THERE
ISN'T ANYTHING YOU
COULD POSSIBLY SAY THAT
WOULD EXCUSE THAT MISTAKE.
SO YOU WANT A PARTNER--
FIND YOURSELF ANOTHER OF
YOUR DEMON BUDDIES YOU
KEEP TELLING ME ARE
ROAMING AROUND.

YOU AND I
ARE OFFICIALLY
DONE!


I WISH
IT WERE
THAT EASY,
JIM.





SO, IN KEEPING WITH THE THEME OF THE EVENING, HERE'S THE TRUTH-- IF WE PART WAYS: YOU GO LEFT. I GO RIGHT-- THAT WON'T END IT NOT BY A LONG SHOT. I'LL FIND NEW METHODS WITH WHICH TO MOTIVATE YOU. METHODS YOU WON'T LIKE. METHODS THAT MIGHT EVEN HURT THOSE WHO HANG AROUND YOU.


BY THE WAY, HOW ARE SARA AND MARC DOING THESE DAYS?




FINE. THEY'RE **BOTH** FINE! YOU'D BETTER HOPE THEY STAY THAT WAY.

OH!! SEEMS I'VE HIT A NERVE. THAT SHOULDN'T SURPRISE YOU.

BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT I DO, JIM-- I **ENCOURAGE** PEOPLE. GENTLY NUDGE THEM TO LOOK PAST THEIR EMOTIONS AND FACE THE COLD, HARD FACT OF REALITY. IF THAT DOESN'T WORK, THERE'S A HIGH PROBABILITY THAT SOMEONE THEY CARE FOR ACCIDENTALLY DISAPPEARS.



IT'S NOT SOMETHING I WANT. AND, BELIEVE ME-- YOU DON'T EITHER. I'M NOT MAKING ANY THREATS-- JUST BEING STRAIGHT WITH YOU.



AND NOT THAT YOU GIVE A CRAP, BUT AS MUCH AS YOU DISLIKE THE THOUGHT OF PARTNERING UP WITH ME-- YOU CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE HOW DESPERATE I MUST BE TO EVEN THINK OF JOINING FORCES WITH A SPAWN.

SADLY... NEITHER OF US HAS A CHOICE.

SO, JIM WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?



I'LL
HELP.

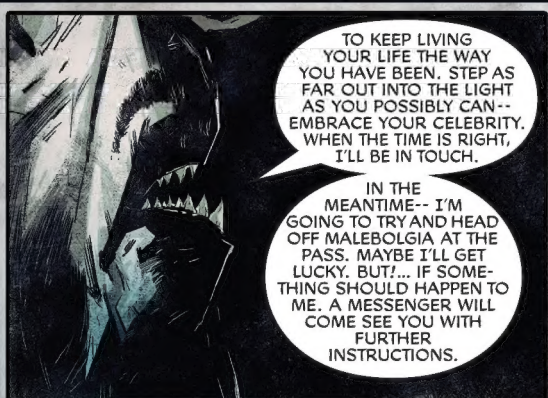
FOR NOW. BUT
ONLY BECAUSE I STILL
NEED ANSWERS. AND I THINK
YOU'RE KEEPING MORE FROM ME
THAN YOU'RE LETTING ON-- ABOUT
WHO I AM, ABOUT MY POWERS.
ABOUT *EVERYTHING*! BUT THE SECOND
WE'RE CLEAR OF THIS MESS-- ONCE
MALEBOLGIA'S DEAD, AND I HAVE
MY LIFE BACK TOGETHER-- YOU
AND ME, WE'RE GONNA HAVE
ANOTHER *SERIOUS* HEART-
TO-HEART TALK.



ONLY
SEEMS
FAIR.



WHAT
DO YOU
NEED FROM
ME THEN?



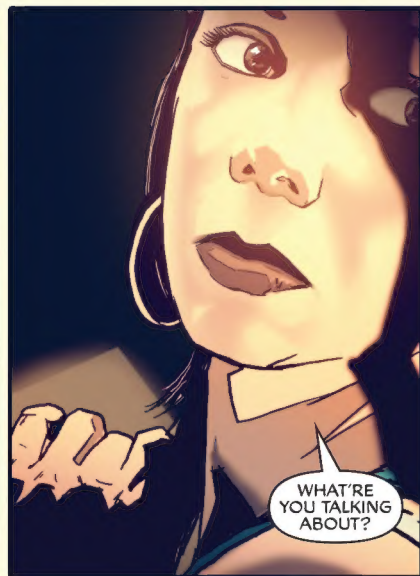
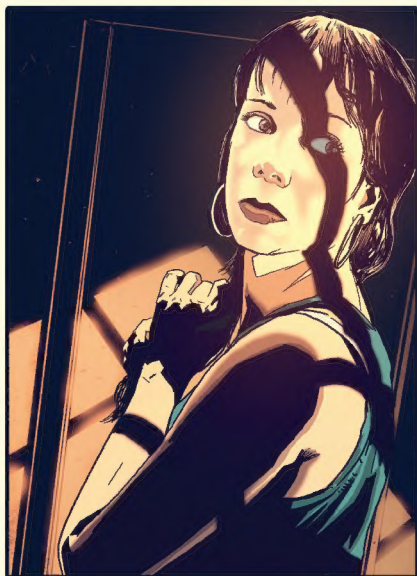
TO KEEP LIVING
YOUR LIFE THE WAY
YOU HAVE BEEN. STEP AS
FAR OUT INTO THE LIGHT
AS YOU POSSIBLY CAN--
EMBRACE YOUR CELEBRITY.
WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT,
I'LL BE IN TOUCH.

IN THE
MEANTIME-- I'M
GOING TO TRY AND HEAD
OFF MALEBOLGIA AT THE
PASS. MAYBE I'LL GET
LUCKY. BUT!... IF SOME-
THING SHOULD HAPPEN TO
ME. A MESSENGER WILL
COME SEE YOU WITH
FURTHER
INSTRUCTIONS.



YOU'VE
MADE THE
RIGHT
DECISION,
JIM.

AND
THOUGH
YOU DON'T SEE IT
NOW-- I'M TELLING
YOU-- WE'RE THE
GOOD GUYS
HERE!





JUST
COME WITH
ME...

I'M ABOUT TO
**CHANGE THE
WORLD.**





Tyrant
Lizard
King

EMPIRE